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BALTIMORE MAN SENTENCED TO 57 MONTHS FOR BANK FRAUD

Baltimore, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced today that Biodun Sholola, age 29, a native of Nigeria now living in Baltimore, Maryland, was sentenced late yesterday by U.S. District Judge Catherine C. Blake to 57 months in prison followed by 5 years of supervised release after pleading guilty to bank fraud on May 7, 2003. Judge Blake also ordered that Sholola make restitution in the amount of \$1,041,331.42.

During the sentencing hearing the government presented evidence that between July 2001 and December 2002, Sholola was involved in the theft and subsequent attempt to fraudulently negotiate approximately 170 stolen checks. At the time, Sholola was an employee of Worldwide Flight Service, a contractor charged with handling United States mail at Baltimore-Washington International Airport ("BWI"). The stolen checks, which had been printed by the John Harland Company at its Edgewood, Maryland printing facility, were being routed through BWI for delivery to customers of various financial institutions living in other parts of the country. After Sholola had stolen the checks, he and others would typically send the checks by overnight mail to co-conspirators or unwitting vendors residing in other states, often as part of an effort to acquire

electronics and other merchandise which were then to be shipped to Nigeria. As part of the scheme, Sholola and his associates would obtain social security numbers of the bank customers for whom the checks were originally intended, as well as information concerning the amounts available in the accounts on which the stolen checks were made to be drawn.

In total, Sholola and his co-conspirators attempted to negotiate approximately \$4,377,624.55 in stolen checks and caused losses to financial institutions and other businesses in excess of \$1,041,331.42. During the same period, Sholola also stole approximately 30 credit cards from the mail which were then used to purchase at least \$30,000 in goods and services.

The case was investigated by the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jonathan Mastrangelo and Joyce McDonald.